

Washington, DC -- Congressman Vern Buchanan (FL-13) will introduce a House resolution this week demanding that all conference committee meetings on a sweeping health care reform bill be conducted in the open "under the watchful eye of the American people."

Buchanan's resolution would put the House on record against secret, closed-door talks among lawmakers who will draft the final health care bill to be brought before the House for consideration.

"In Florida, we put a high priority on the public's access to government meetings," said Buchanan. "The Florida Sunshine Law helps ensure an open government. It is time to shine some Florida Sunshine on the Halls of Congress."

Buchanan's resolution notes that lawmakers negotiating the final details of the health care reform bill have met privately behind closed doors and expresses the sense of the House that any meetings held to determine the content of national health care legislation be conducted in public to provide full transparency.

The entire resolution reads:

"Whereas, House rules allow conference committees to hold closed-door meetings that exclude the public and press;

"Whereas, full transparency is critical to a healthy democracy, such openness has not always been the case among conferees who have met privately behind closed doors;

"Whereas, in previous years, conferees have met in small rooms or private meetings and circumvented full transparency;

"Whereas, the New York Times has reported on a disturbing pattern of House leadership skirting open access by allowing small groups of conference committee members to meet privately;

"Whereas, ABC News reported earlier this year that the \$1 Trillion Stimulus bill was passed after "closed-door negotiations";

"Whereas, health care reform is one of the largest public policy reforms taken up by Congress in generations;

"Whereas, health care reform will impact the lives of all Americans;

"Whereas, health care constitutes 1/6 of our nation's economy;

"Whereas, the Congress is elected by the people to serve the people: Now, therefore, be it

"Resolved, that it is the sense of the House of Representatives that any conference committee or meetings held to determine the content of sweeping national health care legislation be held in

full public view, not behind closed doors.”

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